
Review Article

The influence of 19th-century historical-comparative linguistics in Japan, with a focus on English studies in Japan in its early stage

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【Abstract】 During the period of modernization, Japan learned eagerly from the West the ideal forms for promoting and fostering science and technology. In the study of language, considered broadly as a branch of humanities, there is no exception to this rule. In this intellectual climate, the new wave of language science, i.e., historical-comparative linguistics, rushed into Japan from the West and extended its influence particularly in 1) description of as many linguistic phenomena as possible, 2) explanation of individual grammatical phenomena, and 3) interpretation of grammatical phenomena by means of the historical, comparative, and psychological methods. At the same time, this approach is not totally of Western origin, but also closely identical with philological and exegetical study of classical language and literature by Japanese *kokugaku* (national studies) scholars in the Edo period, e.g., Motoori Norinaga's inquiry into *Kojiki*, or *Record of Ancient Matters*. In this sense, the scientific methodology of linguistic study introduced from the West had a great influence on Japanese linguistics and resonated with the traditional approach of language study in Japan.

【Key words】 history of linguistics, language study in Japan, the 19th century, historical-comparative linguistics, philological approach

Introduction

During the period of modernization or westernization in the early Meiji Era, Japan learned eagerly from the West the “ideal forms or types” for promoting and fostering science and technology, establishing and managing new institutions and organizations, and, as an ultimate concern, making the people equally educated and ready for a modern state nation.

It should be emphasized here that the Meiji leaders demonstrated, from an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm, a particular interest in the sphere of edu-

cation as well as science and technology. Not only did they invite scholars of the highest rank at the highest wage from the Western countries to the imperial universities and military schools, but also sent a greater number of young promising scholars and students as a *ryugakusei* to Europe and America. The best and brightest of the young generation of Japan absorbed the most advanced results of science and technology of the West and prepared themselves for the leading positions in each field in replacing the employed foreign teachers.

In the study of language, considered broadly as a

branch of humanities, there is no exception to this rule. The new wave of philology and linguistics rushed into Japan and extended its influence over the academic world. English studies in Japan, for example, were strongly influenced by the western scholars.⁽¹⁾

In the following chapters I examine this influence focusing on the attitude or philosophy of language study of leading English scholars in Japan of that period.

1. Practical Attitude

The first English grammar printed in Japan is *Eibun-kagami* [英文鑑], or *Mirror to English*, published in 1840. This book is the Japanese translation from the Dutch version of Lindley Murray's (1745-1826) *English Grammar* (1795). Therefore, the honor of being the first Japanese scholar who compiled an English grammar should be awarded to Hidesaburo Saito [斎藤秀三郎] (1866-1929), whose masterpiece was written in English entitled *Practical English Grammar* (1898).

As we notice from Saito's remarks, "the main design of this book is to help clear away the difficulties which the Japanese student experiences in mastering the idiomatic usages of the English language" (1898, Preface), this grammar aimed to be more of a "school grammar" than a scientific survey. While it is very descriptive, it is written for the convenience of Japanese learners of the English language.

In 1932 Saito published *Monographs on Prepositions* in thirteen volumes after three year's devotion to completion. The main characteristic of this work is found in its comprehensiveness; all English prepositions are analyzed thoroughly with detailed examples of their usage. Saito's scientific attitude was a result of the great impact and influence of the *Grundlichkeit* of his contemporary German An-

glicists, in particular, Eduard Mätzner (1805-1902) (Saito, 1932; Omura, 1960).

The style and system of Saito's *Monograph* is in the comprehensive and descriptive manner of Mätzner's *Englische Grammatik*. However, Saito's attitude and purpose in compiling grammar was more inclined to "practical" use for students, and not just for the sake of "science" itself.

2. Scientific Attitude

Sanki Ichikawa [市河三喜] (1886-1970) and Istuki Hosoe [細江逸記] (1884-1947) are two of the most distinguished successors of Saito in the early history of English studies in Japan. Both of them, unlike Saito, had a strong scientific tendency and started their career with the challenge and criticism of Saito's English grammar.

Ichikawa and Saito belonged to the age of *Strum und Drang* of English Philology in Europe (Otsuka, 1949) and had strong influence from numerous grammarians of the first quarter of the 20th century, most of whom examined the English language from 1) historical-comparative and 2) physiologicalpsychological perspectives.

2.1. Sanki Ichikawa

One of Ichikawa's major works is *Eibunpoukenkyu* [英文法研究], or *Studies in English Grammar* (1912). This work is composed of his collected papers on English grammar and usage published in *Eigo-seinen* [英語青年], or *the Rising Generation*, the scholarly Journal for English studies. The following preface contributed to this book by Ichikawa's master, John Lawrence (1850-1916), the father of English studies in Japan, shows the general atmosphere of English studies of Japan at that time:

In the following chapters Mr. Ichikawa discusses many English phrases which even Englishmen, unless they have made their language a special study, would be much at a loss to account for satisfactorily. [...] Hitherto, such patient exploration has been chiefly carried on, not by Englishmen (to our shame be it spoken) but by foreigners, and especially by Germans. [...] we have to thank the Germans Koch and Mätzner, Einkenel and Wülfig — Professor Jespersen, who is a Dane — Professor Stoffel, a Dutchman, and others not of English birth. (1912, iii-iv).

Not only does Lawrence praise the highly reputable level of English studies by Ichikawa, but admires the contribution of non-English scholars to the study of English as well. The grammarians quoted by Lawrence — Koch, Mätzner, Einkenel, Wülfig, Jespersen, and Stoffel — can be regarded as representatives in the study of the English language at the turn of the century.

Ichikawa himself acknowledges his indebtedness to those grammarians in the preface of the same book:

従来わが国で用いられている文法書には十分な説明を見いだすことのできないものである。しかし、その過半はすでにオランダの Stoffel やデンマークの Jespersen, ノルウェイの Storm らが詳しく研究したことで, [...] 研究の態度, 説明の方法等に関してはこれらの学者のひそみに倣ったところが少なくない。

[These problems are not sufficiently examined in grammar books present in our country. But the greater part of them has been scrutinized by Stoffel of Holland, Jespersen of Denmark, and Storm of Norway. [...] I followed such scholars with regard to the attitude of surveying and the manner of explanation.] (1912, v, translation

mine: HE)

As Ichikawa pointed out, he respected and followed the “scientific” attitude towards the study of language. He continues to show the primary objective of this work, which can be thought of as the alpha and omega of Ichikawa’s methodology:

要はただ文法をもって単に英語を正しく話したり書いたりする術であるとか, あるいは文法の教える規則は絶対なもので, これに違反する言い方は不正であるとかというような見方を避けて, 英語における種々の現象をそのまま言語上の事実として受け入れ, これを公平に観察し, どうしてこういう言い方が生じたかを, あるいは歴史的に上代にさかのぼって, あるいは他の国語との比較研究により, あるいは心理学の立場から, 不完全ながらも説明を試みて見たいというのが本書の趣旨である。[I do not regard grammar just as an art of speaking and writing English correctly; neither do I obey rules of grammar blindly that prescriptively judge one’s English as being right or wrong. I aim in the present book at taking various phenomena of present-day English as such, observing them objectively and, even if not completely scientific, trying to explain them from a historical, comparative and psychological point of view.] (1912, v, translation mine: HE)

As a child of his time Ichikawa’s idea to describe grammar reflects the *Zeitgeist* and demonstrates the basic principles of historical-comparative philology. He also presents a challenge to school grammar which prescribes rules to regulate “how” to express oneself in a correct and conventional way.

For Ichikawa himself, English grammar does not mean the mere “art” of speaking and writing English correctly, but aims at exploring the “nature,” and even seeking to find “laws” underlying superficial

phenomena. This is the principle of historical-comparative philology that established and fostered descriptive and positivistic attitudes.

In the definition of Grammar by Mätzner we observe this typical attitude of the comparatist towards grammar:

Die Grammatik oder Sprachlehre handelt von den Gesetzen der Rede, und zunächst von dem Worte als Grundbestandtheil derselben, in Beziehung auf seinen Stoff und seine Form, in der Laut- und Formenlehre, alsdann von der Verbindung der Wörter in der Rede, in Lehre von der Wort- und Satzfügung.

[Grammar, or the principles of language, treats the laws of speech, and in the first place of the word, as its fundamental constituent, with respect to its matter and its form, in prosody, or the principles of sounds, and morphology, or the principles of forms, and then of the combination of words in speech, in syntax, or the principles of joining words and sentences.](1880-85, p.14, translation and underline mine: HE)

Such a perspective, in which “laws” are highly evaluated in grammatical overview, is common to the historical-comparative grammarians of the 19th-century (Eto, 1997). The most remarkable declaration of “scienticism” in the language study is made by Jacob Grimm:

Allgemeine-logischen begriffen bin ich in der Grammatik feind; sie führen scheinbare strenge und geschlossenheit der bestimmungen mit sich, hemmen aber die beobachtung, welche ich als seele der sprachforschung betrachte. [...] Der dialect, den uns die geschichte als den ältesten, unverdorbenen weist, muß zuletzt auch für die allgemeine darstellung aller verzweigungen des stammes die tiefste regel darbieten und

dann bisher entdeckte gesetze der späteren mundarten reformieren, ohne sie stämmlich auszuheben.

[I am averse to general-logical concepts in grammar. They contain a seeming strictness and closed definitions, but hinder the observation which I regard as the soul of language study. [...]
The dialect that history shows us to be the oldest and the most unspoiled must in the end provide the deepest rule also for the general presentation of all the branches of the source and then reform the laws discovered so far in the later dialects without enlisting all of them.](1822-37, VI, translation mine: HE)

The common attitude towards language study seen in Ichikawa, Matzner, and Grimm can be regarded as purely scientific in its strictness of data-collecting, thorough observation, rational and causal explanation, and further, law framing and formulating.

2.2. Itsuki Hosoe

In contrast to Ichikawa's rather un-systematically constructed anthology of his studies in English grammar, Itsuki Hosoe's *Eibunpou-hanron* [英文法汎論], or *An Outline of English Syntax*, is the first historical, descriptive, and systematic grammar of English published in Japan. Although a great influence from C. T. Onions's (1873-1965) *Advanced English Syntax* (1929) is detectable, his basic idea for grammar writing is identical with that of Ichikawa's. His principle in compiling his Outline is as follows:

真に文法を明らかにしようとするものは、まずつぶさに言語の実情を精査し、その歴史を究め、また言語はそれを用いる人の心的状態の反映であることも忘れず、一方では理論によりこうあるのを可とすると断ずると同時に、多面ではそれにあて

はまらない事実に関してもその存在を直視し、その事実を尊重し、あくまでそのよってきたるゆえんを究明すべく、いやしくも文法を説く以上は、一面では言語の正確度を高めるために良法を指示するだけの覚悟を持つと同時に、他方では言語そのものの本質と動向とを精査し、習俗の準拠する不言の文法にも明察を加え、将来に現れようとする変遷に対しても、同情のできる地位に立つだけの用意がなくてはならない。

[We grammarians must in the first place observe language as such and study its history thoroughly. We must always keep in mind that speech reflects the thought of people speaking. We can correct grammar with logical rules, while we must not neglect facts outside these rules and survey their origin and development. If we wish to write a grammar, we must present reliable rules for speaking and writing with propriety and, at the same time, must study language according to its nature, consider a variety of dialects, so that we may anticipate language changes in speech in the future.] (1971, pp.14-15, translation mine: HE)

This statement leaves a stronger impression of historical-comparative philology as well as of psychology than Ichikawa's in its recognition of a relationship between language and the human mind.

There is still one vitally important feature in Ichikawa and Hosoe's philosophy of grammar writing. The aim of describing grammar in both of them is not only historical in principle, but also inclined to understanding and explaining the present usage of English. As Ichikawa says in the previous quotation, the aim of Ichikawa's grammar is "to explain them from a historical, comparative and psychological point of view" (Ichikawa 1912, v). Hosoe presents an identical idea:

今われわれが研究しようとする英語はもとより近代英語、特にその最近世のものであるが、しかし過去なくして現代はあらず、現代の英語を明らかにしようとするには、しばしば過去の英語を説かなければならない。否、厳密にいうならば過去の英語から由来変遷の跡をたどらずに、英語の真相を把握しようとするのは無理である。ただし、私は本書で企てるところは、そのようにむづかしいものではなく、むしろ実際の見地に立って現代英語の正確な理解に資することであるから、もとより歴史的考察はするもの、多く古語を語らず、説明上真にやむをえない場合、または歴史的事実を説くことが正しい理解に力強い助けを与えるような場合の他は、なるべく中古英語以上にさかのぼることをしない。

[The target of our study is modern English, or present-day English, to be exact. In order to understand today's English, we must often refer to its older stage since the past is a mirror of the present. More precisely speaking, it would be impossible to grasp English as it is today without considering the origin and development of its grammatical phenomena. Nevertheless, the aim of this book is not so much to trace English back to its ultimate origin as to contribute to the precise understanding of present-day English with regard to its practical use. Therefore the present author will not juxtapose unnecessary obsolete forms in OE or ME even in the historical interpretation of English, and will not trace back the English language beyond ME unless such a historical survey is indispensable for explaining grammatical phenomena and providing help in understanding today's English more profoundly.] (1971, pp.13-14, translation mine: HE)

In the sense that the historical survey is regarded as the aid to understand the present phenomena of English correctly, Ichikawa and Hosoe are under

the influence of such English scholars as Henry Sweet (1845-1912) and Onions. Sweet says:

As regards its scope, this grammar is strictly elementary, as far, at least, as a grammar which is scientific and historical and not purely distinctive can be said to answer to this description. It confines itself therefore as much as possible to the main grammatical phenomena and main lines of development; and being based on the language of the present time, it ignores historical details which do not bear on Present English. (1891, x-xi, underline mine: HE)

Onions claims the same viewpoint:

While dealing mainly with the language of the present day, I have endeavoured to make the book of use to the student of early modern English by giving an account of some notable archaic and obsolete constructions. Historical matter has been introduced wherever it was considered necessary for the understanding of important points in syntax-development or seemed to add interest to the treatment of particular constructions. (1929, v, underline mine: HE)

Their standpoint lies in the present use of the tongue. It may be the result of the English people's philosophy, which makes more of reality than of ideal truths.⁽²⁾

3. Concluding Remarks

— “Influence” and/or “Resonance”

Interpreting and analyzing Ichikawa's and Hosoe's remarks, their distinctive features lie in the following respects:

1. Description of as many linguistic phenomena as possible (i.e., not prescriptive, but descriptive);
2. Explanation of individual grammatical phenomena;
3. Interpretation of grammatical phenomena by means of the historical, comparative, and psychological methods.

These characteristics are summarized by the attitude of “exact science”, which is peculiar to the 19th century. We can conclude from this fact that Ichikawa and Hosoe were greatly influenced by the 19th- and early 20th-century historical-comparative grammarians in methodology as well as in the fundamental allocation of historical survey.

On the other hand, however, we can find the source of their attitude towards language study in the Japanese tradition of this discipline. There was practically no systematic study of language in Japan before the national-learning movement of the 18th century (Kaiser, 1994; Eto, 2006), when a fierce nativist reaction emerged against the dominance of foreign studies. Particularly provoked by the existence of the strong Chinese and Dutch schools, the *koku-gaku* (national learning) school rose as a reaction. In order to identify and appreciate the traditional value of Japanese mentality and morality, the *koku-gaku* scholars practiced the textual and exegetical study of Japanese classical literature and ancient writings.

Among these *koku-gaku* scholars, the achievement of Motoori Norinaga [本居宣長] (1730-1801) deserves special attention. Norinaga made an analytical study of classical Japanese (Doi, 1976). Norinaga's ultimate concern as a classical scholar was to discern the identity of Japanese culture through an intensive study of the ancient classics, particularly *Kojiki* [古事記] or *Record of ancient matters* (712) — Japan's oldest extant chronicle from the mythical

age of gods up to the 7th-century Yamato Dynasty (Kobayashi, 1982). In order to understand the text of *Kojiki*, he had to read and scrutinize it precisely word by word, and experience and evaluate what people went through (Motoori, 1982 [1798]). Such an inductive method of Norinaga's in philological and exegetical study of Japanese classical literature provided a model of language and cultural study, particularly in the sphere of descriptive linguistics in Japan (Hattori, 1967).

Linguistics scholars of early 20th-century Japan admired, followed and digested the methods of historical and comparative philology in Europe. But, at the same time, those Japanese scholars were born and lived in their own tradition of language study, which we can observe in philological and exegetical means of language study by Norinaga and other National Learning scholars (Eto, in press). It is concluded that they introduced the scientific methodology of linguistic study from the West, which is called "influence," and they found the equivalent idea of language study in the Japanese soil which is called "resonance."

Notes

1. There is interesting evidence of the western influence on English studies in Japan in its early stage. Of all the 141 entries of scholars' names in the *Kenkyusha Dictionary of English Philology* (Ichikawa, 1940), 124 headwords, i.e., nearly 90%, were European or American names: German (42), English (38), American (30), Dutch (6), Austrian (4), Swedish (4), Danish (3), Norwegian (3), Swiss (3), Finish (1), Polish (1), and French (1). The number of scholars from the German speaking countries is remarkable since this is a dictionary of English philology, not of *Germanistik*.

As is well known, in the latter half of the 19th century, Germany – or rather, German speaking

regions – had been the center, among many other disciplines, of the study of language. In the words of R. H. Robins, "generations of scholars, mostly from Germany or from other countries trained in Germany, built up their subject on the basis of what had been done by their predecessors or earlier contemporaries" (1997, p.190). Germany was the center of language study of the 19th- and early 20th-century Europe, and historical-comparative linguistics was the first and foremost discipline in the study of language. Therefore, logically enough, the students and scholars of language in Japan at that period were under the decisive influence of German scholars or those of other countries trained in Germany, who scrutinized particular languages in a scientific manner, i.e., from historical and comparative perspectives. After World War II, however, the German influence was replaced by that of the United States. The new, i.e., post-war version of the Dictionary published in 1982 contains no articles appreciating German influence on Japanese philologists (Otsuka & Nakajima, 1982).

2. As Jespersen comments on the same subject, "The older stages of the language, interesting as their study is, will be considered only in so far as they throw light either directly or by way of contrast on the main characteristics of present-day English [...]" (1912, 1), it may well be said that such a standpoint is peculiar not only to English scholars, but also to historical-comparative grammarians in general.

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【日本語要旨】

日本の言語研究における 19 世紀史的比較言語学の影響 ——日本の初期英語学に焦点をあてて

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明治開国後のわが国は近代化の範を西洋にとり、科学技術の発展に国を挙げて取り組んだ。言語学も例外ではなく、当事斯界の主流であった史的比較言語学はわが国の言語研究を席捲した。草創期の日本の英語学者による学問的英語研究は、その基本理念、及び方法に当時の西洋の史的比較言語学者たちの強い影響を見ることができる。それは、言語を記述し、その記述された現象を、歴史的、比較的、心理的な視点に立って説明し、解釈する。そして、そこから何かしらの法則を見つけ出すことであった。しかし、言語現象の観察と分析を厳密に行なう手法は、西洋のオリジナルな発明ではなく、わが国の国学の研究手法の中にも見出すことができる。本居宣長の古事記研究はその一例と言えるが、その意味で、明治期に西洋から取り入れた厳密科学としての史的比較言語学の手法は、わが国の伝統的な言語研究と響きあいながら、新しい言語研究の風を吹き込んだと言えよう。

キーワード：言語学史，日本の言語研究，19 世紀，史的比較言語学，文献学的手法

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